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Natural Nutrition — Allergies — March 2000

Vitamin C Can Help Allergies

Is Your Nose Running You?

By: Allan N. Spreen, MD, The Nutrition Physician

It's a common misconception (perpetuated by the pharmaceutical companies), that all you can do for allergies is handle the symptoms...antihistamines, decongestants, nasal sprays, and what-have-you.

Ain't so.

Dr. Linus Pauling, Ph.D., and double-Nobel Laureate, said in one of his books, if you had a runny nose (allergic rhinitis) and you were simultaneously taking "Vitamin C", then you weren't taking enough Vitamin C...period. I had trouble with the theory at the time, because I had been taking 3,000 milligrams (3 grams) daily, which I thought was a huge dose. I doubled the dose (2 grams with each meal) and still felt no better. The 30-YEAR RUNNY NOSE I had was no better (no kidding...every day for 30 years). I decided to try one more hit. The very day that I increased to 9 grams/day was the last day of my runny nose for over 6 years.

I've reported this before, but for those haunted with allergies (inhalant or other types) the news bears repeating. I later found that lower doses of Vitamin C were possible for allergy relief if they were combined with other nutrients, the first

being **citrus bioflavonoids**, 1000 milligrams/day. It is being studied in concert with vitamin C at doses up to 8,000 milligrams of each daily, for the more severe allergic problems. What's neat is that the Vitamin C acts like an antihistamine but without any sleepy or hyper side effects.

There are other items in the armamentarium, however. The herb **echinacea**, taken 2-3 times per day at the earliest onset of allergy symptoms, can be a big help. Whether this is due to mistaking viral illnesses for allergy is undetermined, but it still seems to be worth a shot. Once symptoms abate, then the herb should be discontinued. It is not a preventive agent.

If allergies cause bronchial symptoms, then **NAC (n-acetylcysteine)** can be a real help. This is a detoxifying agent that seems to have a preference for the lungs.

If nasal symptoms are the worst, consider avoiding steroids and nasal antihistamines, opting instead for generic saline nasal sprays (ask your pharmacist). Though not a nutrient per se this agent is totally non-toxic and has no rebound (symptoms return stronger later) or tolerance (need more for same effect).

Keeping the immune system strong helps fight allergies. **MSM (methyl sulfonyl methane)** is a high-sulfur nutrient that's worth a try along those lines, along with **garlic extracts**.

If food allergies are more prominent, consider rotating off common foods for 7 days (21 for dairy) if there are cravings or you eat the item everyday). If that helps, then rationing the food might work, say once per week, along with a trial of digestive enzymes (such as **Super Enzyme** by NOW, twice right after meals), plus eating slowly and chewing thoroughly. Poorly digested food can make sensitivities more prominent.

Getting a food allergy that "sets you off" right away with sneezing, runny nose, itchy eyes, etc., may, for some reason

respond to sips of sodium bicarbonate (Alka-Seltzer Gold).

Don't give up when "allergy season" hits. It's still possible to beat the symptoms without getting stuck in a drug "fog."

Good Health,

Allan N. Spreen, MD

The Nutrition Physician®

Dr. Spreen is a nutritionally-oriented medical doctor in practice for over a decade before concentrating on nutritional writing. He is known for his original 'Nutrition Physician' on-line sites for both America Online and iVillage's 'The Women's Network', offering nutrition information directly to the public. His authored works include Nutritionally Incorrect-Why the American Diet is Dangerous & How to Defend Yourself (Woodland); Smart Medicine for Healthier Living (Avery), co-authored with Janet Zand and James LaValle; and The Menopause Diet (Woodland).

A graduate of both the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of Tennessee before obtaining his M.D. from East Tennessee State University, Dr. Spreen wears a second hat as a coach of competitive divers at the national and Olympic levels.



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